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Behind the Rain Curtain

Edith Burrows

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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Successful Rural Plays

A Strong List From Which to Select Your Next Play

FARM FOLKS. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. For five male and six female characters. Time of playing, two hours and a half. One simple exterior, two easy interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Flora Goodwin, a farmer's daughter, is engaged to Philip Burleigh, a young New Yorker. Philip's mother wants him to marry a society woman, and by falsehoods makes Flora believe Philip does not love her. Dave Weston, who wants Flora himself, helps the deception by intercepting a letter from Philip to Flora. She agrees to marry Dave, but on the eve of their marriage Dave confesses, Philip learns the truth, and he and Flora are reunited. It is a simple plot, but full of speeches and situations that sway an audience alternately to tears and to laughter.

HOME TIES. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. Characters, four male, five female. Plays two hours and a half. Scene, a simple interior—same for all four acts. Costumes, modern. One of the strongest plays Mr. Tubbs has written. Martin Winn's wife left him when his daughter Ruth was a baby. Harold Vincent, the nephew and adopted son of the man who has wronged Martin, makes love to Ruth Winn. She is also loved by Len Everett, a prosperous young farmer. When Martin discovers who Harold is, he orders him to leave Ruth. Harold, who does not love sincerely, yields. Ruth discovers she loves Len, but thinks she has lost him also. Then he comes back, and Ruth finds her happiness.

THE OLD NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME. A New England Drama in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For seven males and four females. Time, two hours and a half. Costumes, modern. A play with a strong heart interest and pathos, yet rich in humor. Easy to act and very effective. A rural drama of the "Old Homestead" and "Way Down East" type. Two exterior scenes, one interior, all easy to set. Full of strong situations and delightfully humorous passages. The kind of a play everybody understands and likes.

THE OLD DAIRY HOMESTEAD. A Rural Comedy in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For five males and four females. Time, two hours. Rural costumes. Scenes rural exterior and interior. An adventurer obtains a large sum of money from a farm house through the intimidation of the farmer's niece, whose husband he claims to be. Her escapes from the wiles of the villain and his female accomplice are both starting and novel.

A WHITE MOUNTAIN BOY. A Strong Melodrama in Five Acts, by CHARLES TOWNSEND. For seven males and four females, and three supers. Time, two hours and twenty minutes. One exterior, three interiors. Costumes easy. The hero, a country lad, twice saves the life of a banker's daughter, which results in their betrothal. A scoundrelly clerk has the banker in his power, but the White Mountain boy finds a way to checkmate his schemes, saves the banker, and wins the girl.

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

Behind the Rain Curtain

A Play for Children

By

EDITH BURROWS

Author of "A Garden Cinderella"



PHILADELPHIA

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

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Behind the Rain Curtain

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Behind the Rain Curtain

CAST OF CHARACTERS

IMAGINATION.

JOAN.....*A mortal child*
THE-LITTLE-GIRL-WHO-CAME-WITH-YOU.

EAST WIND.....*A guide*
THE RADIANT BEING.

CIRRUS.....*The swiftest Cloud Child*

CUMULUS.....*The warm weather Cloud Child*

STRATUS.....*The nearest-to-earth Cloud Child*

FOG.....*An old man*

MIST-O'-MORNING.....*His beautiful daughter*

DEW.....*The cup-bearer*

ICE

SNOW }*The cold weather ones*

FROST }

LIGHTNING.....*The golden one*

THUNDER.....*Her noisy husband*

RAIN.....*The loveliest of them all*

THREE EARTH VOICES.

THE VOICE OF JOAN'S MOTHER.

TIME OF PLAYING:—Forty-five minutes.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Joan is very bored because it has been raining for five whole days, and wishes it would never rain again. Then she is led away to the Kingdom of Moisture behind the rain curtain, and there she meets Fog and Mist, Thunder and Lightning, Ice, Snow and Frost, and they show her what the granting of her wish would mean.

COSTUMES, ETC.

IMAGINATION wears during the Prologue and the first part of the Epilogue, a long enveloping cloak of gray, with an attached pointed hood, concealing all but her face. When she discards the cloak and hood at the end of the play, she appears in a rainbow colored costume of shaded dyed scarves of silk or cheese-cloth.

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-WHO-CAME-WITH-YOU wears an ordinary little girl's dress.

JOAN wears an ordinary little girl's dress.

EAST WIND wears long flowing soft draperies, pale gray in tone. Her face and head are veiled by a semi-transparent gray tissue, which is caught in place by a silver bandeau and floats about her as she moves. This costume can be easily made from cheese-cloth.

THE RADIANT BEING wears a white costume, classic in line and made various in hue by the rainbow lights which are shining down upon it. Cheese-cloth will do beautifully here.

CIRRUS wears a thin silky robe of white with some imitation snow on it to represent the ice-crystals composing the Cirrus clouds. This part should be taken by one who is graceful and very light of foot.

CUMULUS wears a short fluffy white costume, with puffs of cotton attached at intervals and carries over one arm a small basket of summer flowers.

FOG wears trailing robes, part white, part gray and part yellow. This costume can be easily made from cheese-cloth, properly dyed so as to suggest the fog

tones. He has white hair and a long white beard. He carries a staff on which he leans.

MIST-O'-MORNING wears a short white Greek costume for dancing, of fluffy white and rosy hues. White cheese-cloth with rose-colored scarves would do well here.

DEW wears a short fluffy dress of gray gauze trimmed with chains of gleaming glass beads like drops of dew. She carries a large silver cup or chalice.

ICE, SNOW and FROST are mysterious white draped figures with their heads covered. They move close together as if in unison and their faces are never seen. If feasible they should be kept in shadow as much as possible. They, too, all glisten with snow and ice.

LIGHTNING wears a straight, golden yellow robe and a crown of gold paper with many spikes like a Liberty crown on her head. She carries a torch.

THUNDER wears a long dark cloak and shrouding hood, which give him a forbidding and mysterious air.

STRATUS wears long draperies of dull gray, the gray of rain-clouds hanging near the earth. This costume may easily be made of dyed cheese-cloth, where shaded effects may be introduced if desired.

RAIN wears a thin silky costume of pale gray with over draperies consisting of silver spangled scarf or scarves, which give her a gleaming, sparkling appearance.

The part of THE-LITTLE-GIRL-WHO-CAME-WITH-YOU should be played by a little girl who sits in the audience and gives her speeches from there. These speeches only occur during the Prologue and Epilogue and so will not take the attention of the audience from the main course of the play.

NOTES ON STAGING

If possible, the outer curtains should be gray, but any good neutral-toned curtains will do. The only furniture required for Prologue and Epilogue is an easy-chair, as the window is furnished by—Imagina-

tion! The stage back-drop and sides should be hung with dull gray curtains with gray gauze veiling them in places to give the effect of misty spaces, and the lights should all shine through gray gauze. If possible, a gray gauze curtain should hang in front of the throne, where the Radiant Being sits, to give an air of mystery, and all her arch of rainbow lights should shine through gray gauze. For the back and side curtains, dyed cheese-cloth may be used effectively, if other material proves too expensive, and if a very thin quality is used it will serve admirably as gauze veiling for the lights. The floor should be covered with light gray paper muslin, painted to appear transparent and gleaming in places with snow powder to give the effect of ice-crystals. The platform and throne of the Radiant Being should be wood covered with white cloth and heaped up with big fluffs of cotton to simulate cloud effects. All this staging may be made very simple but very effective by a skilful use of the side lights and the rainbow colored lights which should hang from the wall back of the throne.

MUSIC

Where music is indicated, any good classical music may be used.

Behind the Rain Curtain

PROLOGUE

(The Prologue is enacted in the shallow space, between the footlights and the curtains, which if possible should be soft gray in tone. At the extreme right of this space stands an easy chair. As the footlights go up, IMAGINATION enters slowly from the left, takes a few steps and then pauses to survey us.)

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-WHO-CAME-WITH-YOU. Ooh—who is she?

IMAGINATION *(answering her)*. I am Imagination at your service; pray, make use of me! You will scarcely need me to tell you that this object—*(pointing to chair)* is a chair; nor yet—*(she claps her hands in summons and then indicates JOAN, who enters from R. and languidly sits in chair)* that this is a mortal child.

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-ETC. What's her name?

IMAGINATION. Her name is Joan, and she is *very* bored.

(JOAN yawns widely and rests her head on her hand.)

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-ETC. Why is she bored?

IMAGINATION. Because it has been raining for five whole days. Listen, and you can hear it.

(A pause, during which no sound is heard.)

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-ETC. I don't hear anything.

IMAGINATION *(finger on lips)*. S-sh! Listen! *(A sound of rain is heard pattering faintly and then more loudly, until it finally dies away.)* There; you heard

it. That's what Joan's been hearing for days and days. She can't think of another thing to do, so she's going to sit in that chair and look out of the window ——

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-ETC. (*interrupting in surprise*). Window?

IMAGINATION. Certainly, window. If you make use of me you can see quite clearly that the window is here —— (*Pointing to a spot between JOAN's chair and center stage, then anxiously continuing.*) You do see the window, don't you?

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-ETC. (*slowly*). Ye-es, I see it now.

IMAGINATION (*relieved*). Of course you see it! Well then, Joan is going to look out of the window at the rain, which is coming down so fast that it seems almost like curtains of water shutting away the outside world.

(JOAN gazes steadily before her, as if she were watching the rain, and then yawning, speaks.)

JOAN. Ugh! I hate rain! I wish it would never rain again!

IMAGINATION (*finger on lips, steals quietly toward extreme left and speaks just before she goes off stage*). The rain is singing a very sleepy song!

(*She disappears and the sound of rain begins again, accompanied by soft music if possible. JOAN settles herself comfortably in the big chair and seems to drowse. The lights gradually dim until the stage is entirely dark. During this time the chair is removed and JOAN moves center stage before the curtains. At length music ceases and she speaks.*)

JOAN. How strangely like a swinging silvery curtain the rain looks! Why, it is coming nearer and nearer!

EAST WIND (*unseen, on other side of curtain*). Joan, Joan, come through the Rain Curtain to our side!

JOAN (*eagerly*). How can I get through?

EAST WIND. Don't you see the opening? Come!

(*The lights come on dimly and soft music again sounds as the outer curtains part slowly and JOAN steps through into a gray and misty region. Just enough light is thrown on the stage to reveal the figure of the child and of EAST WIND in the foreground. The music ceases.*)

THE RADIANT BEING (*unseen and far behind the misty gray under-curtains*). Where is the child who hates the rain?

EAST WIND. She is here, Majesty.

RADIANT BEING. Summon her to our presence, East Wind.

EAST WIND. Yea, Majesty! (*Then turning to JOAN she holds out her hand and speaks.*) Come with East Wind, Joan!

(*JOAN takes the outstretched hand and together the two figures very, very slowly seem to float up stage, c. During this movement, soft music sounds and the lights on the stage gradually come up, revealing a setting of heavy, soft gray curtains, misted over with lighter ones of gray gauze through which glimmer rosy lights. At back, center stage is a cloudy platform on which is seated the RADIANT BEING, over whose head arch beautiful rainbow colored lights which help to illuminate the scene. The floor is of transparent ice crystals, through which feathery clouds may be seen floating far below. The music ceases.*)

JOAN (*gasping with surprised delight*). Oh, where are we?

EAST WIND. In the Kingdom of Moisture.

RADIANT BEING (*looking at JOAN, whom EAST WIND has brought before the Cloud throne*). Is this the child, East Wind?

EAST WIND (*bowing low*). Yes, Majesty.

RADIANT BEING (*clapping her hands softly together*). Ho Cirrus! Come hither, my swiftest Cloud Child.

(Enter from R. CIRRUS, who floats rapidly toward the throne and bowing low, asks.)

CIRRUS. What is your wish, Majesty?

RADIANT BEING *(smiling)*. Cirrus, because you fly highest and fastest of all the Clouds, I would have you search out and bring to me your sister, Stratus, who loves to fly near to Earth.

CIRRUS. Your bidding shall be done, Majesty.

(And she is off R., even as she speaks.)

EAST WIND *(to JOAN, pointing to pavement)*. See!

JOAN *(looking down through the crystals)*. O-oh, we can see her! Where is she going?

EAST WIND. She is floating down to earth, to find Stratus. Look now, the other clouds have hidden her.

RADIANT BEING *(calling sweetly)*. Cumulus, Cloud-Child of warm days—approach!

(CUMULUS drifts lazily in from L. and approaching the throne, slowly bows.)

CUMULUS. What will you have of me, Majesty?

RADIANT BEING. See that my children Fog, Mist and Dew, together with Lightning and Thunder, appear presently in our hall. There is something which we must discuss. *(CUMULUS starts slowly away to obey this command, then the RADIANT BEING, holding up her hand, adds.)* Stay! I had almost forgotten that Ice, Snow and Frost must be with us also, though 'tis not their season to appear.

(CUMULUS lazily nods assent and then drifts off L. to deliver the RADIANT BEING's message.)

JOAN *(looking after her)*. She makes me think of blue skies and warm summer days. *(FOG appears at L. and leaning on his stick moves slowly toward the throne.)* Oh—who is that?

EAST WIND. Fog, the old man of our kingdom. *(FOG bows low before the RADIANT BEING and then standing at L. of throne he beckons to some one off*

stage, L.) See, he is summoning his beautiful daughter, Mist-o'-Morning, who has lingered behind to play with the Sunbeams. Here she comes now.

(Soft strains of some classic dance music sound and MIST-O'-MORNING trips lightly in from the L. and executes an æsthetic dance, which she finishes before the RADIANT BEING with a graceful bow. She then takes a place near her father. Meanwhile, also from the L., little DEW has entered and now approaches the throne, holding aloft her silver chalice.)

JOAN (*pulling EAST WIND'S arm excitedly*). Oh, who is the darling little one coming?

EAST WIND. Can you guess?

JOAN. Is it Dew?

EAST WIND. Yes, little Dew, the cup-bearer for all growing things.

(DEW bows before the RADIANT BEING and stands near FOG and MIST-O'-MORNING.)

JOAN (*shivering*). B-rrrr! I'm cold! What makes it so chilly here now?

EAST WIND (*pointing to R., where enter the three mysterious glittering figures, ICE, SNOW and FROST*). There comes the reason. The winter forms of Moisture have entered.

(The three figures start to approach the throne, but the RADIANT BEING waves them back to a place at the R.)

RADIANT BEING. Welcome, my Winter Children, but come not nigh, lest the warm breath of Summer destroy you!

(Suddenly the stage grows dark and LIGHTNING flashes several times before making her entrance. From the darkness, EAST WIND'S voice is heard.)

EAST WIND (*reassuringly to JOAN*). Do not fear, it is Lightning, and she is really very lovely. You will see her in a moment.

(The lights come up as stately LIGHTNING slides in from the R. and bowing to the RADIANT BEING stands R. of throne.)

JOAN. Ooh—isn't she beautiful! *(A terrific peal of thunder sounds and JOAN clutches EAST WIND in alarm.)* Wh-what is that?

EAST WIND *(laughing)*. Only Lightning's husband, Thunder. Here he comes now. *(Pointing R. where THUNDER enters to another reverberating crash and inclining his head toward the RADIANT BEING, takes up his stand near LIGHTNING.)* He makes a great amount of noise, but he's really quite harmless. Come and see.

(As EAST WIND speaks she leads JOAN by the hand across to R. of stage near THUNDER and LIGHTNING. At this point there comes a call from CIRRUS L. off stage.)

CIRRUS. We have found her, we have found her, Majesty!

(CIRRUS and CUMULUS enter L. and stand near MIST-O'-MORNING, etc.)

CUMULUS *(pointing L.)*. She is coming, Majesty; she is coming!

(Enter from L., STRATUS, leading by the hand, RAIN.)

EAST WIND *(to JOAN)*. The tall one is the other cloud child, Stratus, who floats nearest to earth.

JOAN. And the other? The lovely little one—who is *she*, East Wind?

EAST WIND *(looking at JOAN oddly)*. Don't you know?

JOAN. No.

EAST WIND. But you said you hated her!

JOAN *(gasping)*. She is not Rain? Rain is surely not so lovely?

(EAST WIND bows in assent to JOAN's questions.)

STRATUS (*advancing slowly toward throne*). Majesty, you summoned me; so I have come hither with my little sister, Rain.

RADIANT BEING. You have done well, Stratus. (*She waves her to one side, then motioning RAIN to approach nearer, she continues.*) Welcome, Rain child!

RAIN (*one arm raised high in greeting*). Hail, Majesty!

ALL (*softly and sweetly*). Welcome, welcome, little sister Rain!

RAIN (*pattering lightly toward throne*). It is good to be here again, Majesty. My work on earth keeps me away so much, that I often miss you all.

RADIANT BEING. We miss you too, little Rain, so much, that now we mean to keep you here with us forever!

RAIN (*so surprised that she sits down on a cloud seat*). Majesty! (*Gasping.*) But Majesty, you can't mean that! What would the earth do without me?

RADIANT BEING. As to the earth, we've just found out that they don't want you down there! (*Pointing to JOAN, she goes on.*) Here is a mortal child who has just uttered a wish that it might never rain again. It's very simple; she doesn't want you and we *do*, so I'm going to make her wish come true!

RAIN (*turning a shocked little face toward JOAN*). But she can't know what the granting of such a wish would mean!

RADIANT BEING (*quietly*). That's just what we're going to show her.

LIGHTNING (*flashing in a second of darkness*). If Rain never goes to earth again, what good can I do?

(*The lights come up and a rumble and roar of THUNDER is heard.*)

THUNDER. Or I? (*And he scowls at JOAN.*)

ICE, SNOW and FROST (*in muffled tones*). And what will become of us?

(*JOAN shivers again with cold.*)

FOG (*sighing sadly*). Without Rain to take Moisture to earth, neither I nor my daughter, Mist-o'-Morning, can live.

(*He droops his head and MIST-O'-MORNING leans desolately against him.*)

DEW (*looking at her silver chalice and shaking her head*). Nor yet I. I think the flowers will be thirsty down there without me to give them their morning's drink.

STRATUS (*moaning*). If Rain's work on earth is over, then there is no longer need for the clouds.

(*She draws her gray robes over her face.*)

EAST WIND (*rustling softly*). Listen! Listen carefully! The Earth Voices are speaking!

FIRST EARTH VOICE (*from a great distance*). Rain, Rain, where are you? We are the Seeds in the ground and all Growing Things on earth. We miss you and need you. Come back to us, Rain, come back!

SECOND EARTH VOICE (*a little louder*). Why have you gone from us, Rain? We are the Brooks and the Lakes and the Rivers. Even the Oceans join in our cry. Come to us before we perish for lack of you. Come, Rain! Come!

THIRD EARTH VOICE (*the saddest of all*). We are the People of earth, dear Rain, who suffer because you have gone away. The heat burns us and the cold chills us; our thirst is unbearable; we are dying without you!

RAIN (*turning to JOAN*). You hear? Nothing on earth can live without me. (*Stretching out her hands in appeal.*) Oh, little girl, you don't really wish me to stay away from earth, do you?

JOAN (*almost sobbing*). No! (*She stumbles forward toward the throne.*) No, I don't want you to stay away. (*To RADIANT BEING.*) Please, Majesty, please let her come back to earth again.

RADIANT BEING. You are very sure that you wish her back?

JOAN (*eagerly*). Oh, yes! You will let her come?

RADIANT BEING (*slowly*). I think that she may return.

JOAN (*quickly, as the lights grow dimmer and the Kingdom of Moisture begins to fade away*). You promise? You promise?

RADIANT BEING (*as if from a great distance*). She will return. I shall send as a sign of promise to you on earth—(*a pause, then very softly, but quite clearly come the last words*) my Rainbow!

(*The arch of rainbow-colored lights go out on these words, the stage becomes entirely dark, and while soft music is played the outer curtains are dropped, the chair is replaced at L. and JOAN again takes up her drowsing pose in it, as she was when the lights first went out.*)

EPILOGUE

(*The lights go up and the music ceases. From the R. IMAGINATION enters as before.*)

IMAGINATION (*to us, confidentially*). S-sh, she is going to wake up in a moment, and then you'll see ——

(*Pause.*)

THE-LITTLE-GIRL-WHO-CAME-WITH-YOU. What shall we see?

IMAGINATION (*conclusively*). What you will see! Remember—the window is still here. (*Indicating the space in front of JOAN.*) But the rain has almost stopped; the sun is shining through rifts in the clouds. Listen—Joan's mother is calling her!

JOAN'S MOTHER'S VOICE (*off stage*). Joan, little daughter, do you see it? (*JOAN yawns, sits up, rubs her eyes and stretches—the voice continues.*) Look quickly out of the window!

(*JOAN stares out of the make-believe window and IMAGINATION says to us dramatically.*)

IMAGINATION. Now, you'll see!

(And she whisks off her long cloak and stands revealed in her fairy-like rainbow garb looking through from the other side of the window at JOAN.)

JOAN *(clapping her hands in delight as she remembers)*. The promise! The promise! Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Rainbow, dear!

(And clasping hands they both bow low and then disappear through the curtains, leaving you and me and THE-LITTLE-GIRL-WHO-CAME-WITH-YOU to go home and dream of Rainbows.)

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THE OXFORD AFFAIR. A Comedy in Three Acts, by JOSEPHINE H. COBB and JENNIE E. PAINE. For eight female characters. Plays one hour and three-quarters. Scenes, interiors at a seaside hotel. Costumes, modern. The action of the play is located at a summer resort. Alice Graham, in order to chaperon herself, poses as a widow, and Miss Oxford first claims her as a sister-in-law, then denounces her. The onerous duties of Miss Oxford, who attempts to serve as chaperon to Miss Howe and Miss Ashton in the face of many obstacles, furnish an evening of rare enjoyment.

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